

NEWS RELEASE



OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

San Diego, California

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For Immediate Release

OFFICIALS TAKE DOWN GANG-AFFILIATED DRUG TRAFFICKERS; TAKE DOZENS OF GUNS OFF THE STREET

NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY – February 6, 2014

San Diego – Forty-five people with links to six criminal street gangs have been charged with gun and methamphetamine-trafficking crimes in indictments unsealed this week.

Following a yearlong investigation and a three-day gang sweep that concluded this morning, 40 defendants were in custody and 52 weapons were taken off the streets. A coalition of local, state and federal agents also conducted searches at eight locations – including sites in Linda Vista, Midtown, City Heights, Mid City, Clairemont Mesa and Oak Park.

Many of these locations are homes where drugs and guns were stored or sold – including an apartment across the street from Hoover High School. Agents and detectives seized \$47,600 in cash at a house in Oak Park this morning, bringing the total of cash seized to almost \$60,000.

Among the guns found during the investigation, dubbed Crystal Palace II: Numerous assault rifles; AR-15 magazine-fed, semi-automatic rifles; high-powered rifles, an SWD M11 9mm (Tec 9) with high capacity magazine and a couple Norinco Mak 90 7.62mm (AK-47) with high capacity magazines.

The 10 indictments describe five different conspiracies with overlapping players, including individuals with ties to the Oriental Killer Boys, the Oriental Mob Crips, the Viet Boys, the Tiny Oriental Crips, the Logan Heights Calle Treinta (KIE-yay TRAIN-tuh) and Linda Vista Crips.

According to indictments and search warrant affidavits, most defendants were drug traffickers selling methamphetamine. Some were felons in possession of firearms.

“We are absolutely committed to making our neighborhoods safe from violent gang activity and drug trafficking,” said U.S. Attorney Laura Duffy. “We will not allow our neighborhoods to become headquarters for drug-pushing, gun-toting gangsters.”

“HSI and our law enforcement partners have struck a serious blow to violent gang organizations in San Diego,” said Derek Benner, special agent in charge for HSI in San Diego. “The focus of Crystal Palace Part II was on disrupting criminal gang activity in Southern California based on previously gathered intelligence. Today’s arrests, which included a number of high-level gang members who were taken off the streets, will immediately improve community safety.”

“This is exactly the type of criminal activity that DEA and its law enforcement partners want to ensure is not afflicting the streets of San Diego,” said Special Agent in Charge William R. Sherman of the San Diego Drug Enforcement Administration.

“Combating violent crime to make our communities safer is our first goal,” said John D’Angelo, Acting Special Agent in Charge of the ATF Los Angeles Field Division. “We best achieve that through effective partnerships and innovative enforcement. In this investigation, our agencies worked together, but uniquely applied our respective resources and enforcement jurisdictions to the overall effort. As a result, we made a far greater impact together than any of us could have alone.”

According to court documents, some of the defendants were distributing methamphetamine far beyond the borders of California – from Hawaii to Guam, and from central California to Minnesota.

This case is the latest in a series of federally-charged, large-scale multi-agency crackdowns on street gang activity in San Diego County neighborhoods. Including today’s indictments, almost 300 people have been charged in a number of major federal gang prosecutions since January 2012, with scores of guilty pleas entered.

What most of these cases have in common is methamphetamine. It’s the perfect commodity for gangs because there is no shortage of customers. It’s cheap, pure and so addictive you can get hooked after just one use. It’s prevalent among the young and old, rich and poor.

Federal prosecutions of methamphetamine drug crimes in the Southern District of California, which includes San Diego and Imperial counties, have increased more than 500 percent in the last five years, from 144 cases in FY 2008 to 910 cases in FY 2013.

While San Diego County was once known for its proliferation of meth labs, the supply of meth has shifted to “superlabs” operated by drug cartels in Mexico. As a result, meth seizures at U.S. ports of entry along

the California-Mexico border have almost doubled. In fiscal 2013, nearly 12,000 pounds of meth were seized at the ports, compared to almost 6,700 pounds two years earlier, according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection stats.

“Meth abuse and trafficking are tremendous problems in our country and our county – and they urgently require more resources and attention,” U.S. Attorney Duffy said. “For all of these reasons, in 2014-2015, my office will be taking a harder look at our role in attacking these problems.”

Many of the defendants are scheduled to make their initial appearances in federal court at 2 p.m. today before U.S. Magistrate Judge Karen S. Crawford.

DEFENDANTS Criminal Case No: 14-CR-0216-MMA

Name	Age	Hometown
Chien Van Nguyen, aka “Chino”	32	San Diego, CA
Israel Soto, aka “Izzy/EZ”	30	El Cajon, CA
Christian Lomeli, aka “Chente”	23	Chula Vista CA
Lori Ann Rodriguez	43	San Diego, CA
Eric Allan Guffin, aka “White Boy”	50	San Diego, CA
Ha Thi Ngoc Nguyen, aka “Holly”	38	San Diego, CA
Lorenzo Orozco, aka “Tony Baloney”	33	San Diego, CA
Anthony Adam Cruz, aka “Tony”	37	San Diego, CA
Eric Hanesana, aka “Slim/Sleepy”	30	San Diego, CA
John Van Trinh, aka “Ngo / Little John”	23	San Diego, CA
Somxay Souphalak, aka “Hay”	38	San Diego, CA
Thalina Perry,	32	San Diego, CA
Thomas Ai Sommay, aka “T-Black”	33	San Diego, CA
Leo Paschal,	32	El Cajon, CA
Theng Sonepaseuth Theimthath, aka “Theng / Baby Blue	36	San Diego, CA

SUMMARY OF CHARGES

Conspiracy to Distribute Methamphetamine in violation of Title 21, U.S.C., Secs. 841(a)(1) and 846;
Possession of Methamphetamine with Intent to Distribute in violation of Title 21, U.S.C., Sec. 841(a)(1);
Felon in Possession of a Firearm in in violation of Title 18, U.S.C., Secs. 922(g)(1) and 924(a)(2)
Maximum Penalties: Life in prison with a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years and a 10 million dollar fine.

DEFENDANTS **Criminal Case No: 14-CR-0224-MMA**

Name	Age	Hometown
Israel Soto, aka "Izzy/EZ"	30	El Cajon, CA
*Aziel Viveros-Navarro, aka "Pariente"	56	Tijuana, Mexico
Jessica Quezada,	23	El Cajon, CA
*Nathan Derek Gardner, aka "Nick"	34	Chula Vista, CA
Gale Mason,	42	San Diego, CA

SUMMARY OF CHARGES

Conspiracy to Distribute Methamphetamine in violation of Title 21, U.S.C., Secs. 841(a)(1) and 846;
Possession of Methamphetamine with Intent to Distribute in violation of Title 21, U.S.C., Sec. 841(a)(1);
Felon in Possession of a Firearm in in violation of Title 18, U.S.C., Secs. 922(g)(1) and 924(a)(2)

Maximum Penalties: Life in prison with a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years and a 10 million dollar fine.

DEFENDANTS **Criminal Case No: 14-CR-0219-MMA**

Name	Age	Hometown
Mario Alberto Miranda-Verdugo	32	San Diego, CA
Israel Soto, aka "Izzy/EZ"	30	El Cajon, CA
*Chad Namoc	29	Pahoa, HI

SUMMARY OF CHARGES

Conspiracy to Distribute Methamphetamine in violation of Title 21, U.S.C., Secs. 841(a)(1) and 846;
Maximum Penalties: Life in prison with a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years and a 10 million dollar fine.

DEFENDANTS**Criminal Case No: 14-CR-0225-MMA**

Name	Age	Hometown
Tam Minh Ta, aka “Tom”	30	San Diego, CA
Trinh Bang Le, aka “Tyson”	42	San Diego, CA
Jesus Efren Guzman,	33	San Ysidro, CA
Giang Van Doan, aka “Shorty”	37	San Diego, CA
*Christopher Sutphin Ibanez,	49	San Diego, CA
Bounpheng Soryadvongsa, aka “Bulldog”	41	San Diego, CA
Rick Minh Ta, aka “Ricky”	27	San Diego, CA
Billy Minh Ta,	29	San Diego, CA
Vong Vongdara, aka “Thigh”	33	San Diego, CA
Jasmine Marie Cross, aka “Kitty”	19	San Diego, CA

SUMMARY OF CHARGES

Conspiracy to Distribute Methamphetamine in violation of Title 21, U.S.C., Secs. 841(a)(1) and 846;
Possession of Methamphetamine with Intent to Distribute in violation of Title 21, U.S.C., Sec. 841(a)(1);
Felon in Possession of a Firearm in in violation of Title 18, U.S.C., Secs. 922(g)(1) and 924(a)(2)
Maximum Penalties: Life in prison with a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years and a 10 million dollar fine.

DEFENDANTS**Criminal Case No: 14-CR-0221-MMA**

Name	Age	Hometown
Dung Van NGUYEN aka “Du”	36	San Diego, CA
Israel Soto, aka “Izzy/EZ”	30	El Cajon, CA
Javier Chavez	48	Riverside, CA
Veovanh Insixengmay aka “Baby”	32	San Diego, CA
Eric Allan Guffin, aka “White Boy”	50	San Diego, CA
Dien Phong Vo	36	San Diego, CA
Louie James Roberts	26	San Diego, CA

Thuy Thu Tu	45	San Diego, CA
*Sengnguen Koulavongsa aka "Nguen"	40	San Diego, CA
Erin Lindsay Connelly	32	El Cajon, CA
*Suzana Vera	39	Salinas, CA

SUMMARY OF CHARGES

Conspiracy to Distribute Methamphetamine in violation of Title 21, U.S.C., Secs. 841(a)(1) and 846;
 Conspiracy to Import Methamphetamine in violation of Title 21, U.S.C. Secs. 952, 960 and 963;
 Importation of Methamphetamine in violation of Title 21, U.S.C., Secs. 952 and 960;
 Possession of Methamphetamine with Intent to Distribute in violation of Title 21, U.S.C., Sec. 841(a)(1);
 Felon in Possession of a Firearm in in violation of Title 18, U.S.C., Secs. 922(g)(1) and 924(a)(2)

Maximum Penalties: Life in prison with a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years and a 10 million dollar fine.

DEFENDANT **Criminal Case No: 14-CR-0223-MMA**

Name	Age	Hometown
Vincent Rubio	36	San Diego, CA

SUMMARY OF CHARGES

Possession of Methamphetamine with Intent to Distribute in violation of Title 21, U.S.C., Sec. 841(a)(1);
 Maximum Penalties: 40 years in prison with a mandatory minimum sentence of 5 years and a 5 million dollar fine.

DEFENDANT **Criminal Case No: 14-CR-0220-MMA**

Name	Age	Hometown
Dat Minh To aka "Tony"	33	San Diego, CA

SUMMARY OF CHARGES

Possession of Methamphetamine with Intent to Distribute in violation of Title 21, U.S.C., Sec. 841(a)(1);
 Felon in Possession of a Firearm in in violation of Title 18, U.S.C., Secs. 922(g)(1) and 924(a)(2)
 Maximum Penalties: 40 years in prison with a mandatory minimum sentence of 5 years and a 5 million dollar fine.

DEFENDANT **Criminal Case No: 14-CR-0218-MMA**

Name	Age	Hometown
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Vinh Van Phan aka "Crack Baby"	33	San Diego, CA
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SUMMARY OF CHARGES

Felon in Possession of a Firearm in in violation of Title 18, U.S.C., Secs. 922(g)(1) and 924(a)(2)
Maximum Penalties: 10 years in prison and a \$ 250,000 dollar fine.

DEFENDANT **Criminal Case No: 14-CR-0217-MMA**

Name	Age	Hometown
Khamsouk Inthavong aka "Speedy"	35	San Diego, CA

SUMMARY OF CHARGES

Felon in Possession of Ammunition in in violation of Title 18, U.S.C., Secs. 922(g)(1) and 924(a)(2)
Maximum Penalties: 10 years in prison and a \$ 250,000 dollar fine.

DEFENDANT **Criminal Case No: 14-CR-0222-MMA**

Name	Age	Hometown
Cu Van Huynh aka "Ku Van Huynh/ Van Cu Huynh"	31	San Diego, CA

SUMMARY OF CHARGES

Felon in Possession of Ammunition in in violation of Title 18, U.S.C., Secs. 922(g)(1) and 924(a)(2)
Maximum Penalties: 10 years in prison and a \$ 250,000 dollar fine.

*Fugitives

AGENCIES

Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Homeland Security Investigations
San Diego Police Department
San Diego County Sheriff's Department
Drug Enforcement Agency
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives

**An indictment or complaint itself is not evidence that the defendants committed the crimes charged.
The defendants are presumed innocent until the Government meets its burden in court of proving
guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.**

